

### A lot has happened this year at RYYO.

We have expanded to include 7 teachers offering outreach classes across the city and the pilot of a karma yoga program at a local high school. Our 5th annual Silent Auction raised over \$6,000 - which would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of the Ottawa Radha Yoga Centre community. This June RYYO is holding its first ever city-wide Yogathon! The response has been amazing, with local studios donating a portion of the proceeds from their classes on June 6th and 7th. As we prepare to take a break from our teaching over the summer, there is lots to reflect on and many blessings to collect. Namaste and thank you for your continued support. - *The RYYO team*



RYYO Teachers 2009 (l to r): Vanessa, Amanda, Jessica, Angelina, Michael, Palma, Luna, Robin

Yoga is helpful because I think teens hold a lot of stress inside. The yoga classes I participated in really helped me to relieve some stress. During the meditating section, I relaxed and flushed all of my bad thoughts out of my mind. That really helped me relax and figure some things out. - *14 yr. old girl*



Some of these girls have been in the Body Talks program for over a year now.

Teaching  
at Christie  
Lake Kids

### And Next Week's Yoga Star Is...

We have been offering BodyTalks (yoga, art and writing) to a group of girls between the ages of 8 – 14 for over a year now at Christie Lake Kids. Through discussions, yoga plays, art activities and journaling, BodyTalks has been evolving as we go deeper on themes such as self-image, self-esteem and confidence. We choose a weekly YOGA STAR, who assumes a leadership role - leading the class through warm-ups and one yoga posture, and taking on other responsibilities throughout the class. At the end of each class, all the participants fill out a 'Recognition Note' for the YOGA STAR, recognizing her for something that they noticed or admire about her. It's a real gift to have this long term relationship with these young women at such a formative stage of their lives, and really neat to think of them as our friends.

~ *Jessica + Amanda*



Above: Teaching at Richard Pfaff Alternate School



Right: participants at Christie Lake Kids



## TEACHING THE PEACEFUL WARRIORS

Coming to Ottawa as RYYO's first male teacher, I knew that I wanted to offer hatha to male youth in a detention centre. However, having lived at Yasodhara Ashram for almost two years, I was afraid that I had become too 'soft'. Would these tough boys show me any mercy?

Exploring where my own strength and confidence come from has led me to develop a program for young boys called the Peaceful Warriors. Since our tentative first class, we have developed a mutual trust, discussing what it takes to be a hero and what kind of strengths we have. We are challenging each other to see the best in ourselves when it is more normal, even cool, to slander oneself and others. Recognizing my own strengths has been an integral part of my own growth as a peaceful warrior, and I feel so blessed to encourage these boys to do the same.

*Michael*

"I think yoga is helpful to us teens because when we get stressed out a lot we spaz out. But since you taught me I found a way to relax my body when I'm angry or depressed. I also tell my friends about ways to relax their body which they also like. So yoga is helpful to us teens.

~13 yr. old male

"Keep up the good work people. We are taking on isolation, poverty, abuse, self-expression, self-image, self-respect and many other issues one step at a time. Soon enough, these steps will become leaps."

-Patrick Berault, Health Promoter, SWCHC



### *Transitional Yoga*

For over five months I have been bringing yoga to young children who live in a shelter for mothers and their children who have left abusive situations. We stretch, talk, and draw in a small living room with a bed sheet hung across the glass doors to limit distraction. The reality of their lives comes out through their stories and some are really painful for me to hear about. I have to come back to my own practice and remember why I am there: to hold a positive energy for the best to come forward for each of these children. I ask questions that encourage them to wonder about what's going on in their bodies and minds. We talk about what it means to share, and how to focus on ourselves in a healthy way. It can be tough but wow, it's so worth it. I feel so grateful for the opportunity. *Palma*

## Karma Yoga: the Yoga of Selfless Service

RYYO offered a karma yoga program for the first time last winter with local youth from Richard Pfaff Alternate School at The Glebe Centre—a long-term care facility for seniors. From throwing balloons for the seniors, to manicures and hand massages I still wasn't sure how selfless service would be received by the teenagers. After a couple hours, we called the students back for a discussion; reflection being an integral aspect of karma yoga. We talked about the level of choice we have in our lives and each answered the question: "How can I exercise choice so I can feel good about the things I do?" The discussion that followed was astounding: I now know how much potential there is in karma yoga for mental & spiritual blossoming at all ages.

*Luna*

"Thank you very much for being a great instructor. I am overjoyed with the commitment the youth have for their own self care. You are great with keeping us on track, and allowing us to squeak some laughter here and there. This is my first time partnering with a yoga centre for youth living in the shelter. We would like to build on the program until the end of the school year. Thanks so much for bringing in the gratitude of sun, awareness, stress, and strong bodies."

~ Jennifer Findley, Educational Counselling + School Liaison Worker